

BBC Learning English

Talk about English

Live webcast
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About this script

Please note that this is not a word for word transcript of the programme as broadcast. In the recording process changes may have been made which will not be reflected here.

Callum: Hello, I'm Callum Robertson

Anna: I'm Anna Jones

Callum: And this is Talk about English, coming live from the offices of BBC Learning English in London

Anna: Coming up in today's programmes we look at the history of the Beatles, the Fab Four as a new musical opens in Las Vegas

Callum: We visit a Tiffany jewellery exhibition.

Anna: And we also hear how one word can have two meanings which are exactly opposite to each other.

Callum: To start the programme this week, some music. Here's Tim Heffer with a rundown of the top 5 best selling songs in the UK this week,

CHART SHOW RUNDOWN

Anna: That was Tim Heffer with this week's top 5.

Callum: Still on the subject of pop music we're now going to focus on perhaps the most famous pop group of all time. The Beatles

Anna: John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Star were four boys from Liverpool who have dominated the world of pop music from the early 1960's.

Callum: Although only two members of the band are still alive and they last recorded together over thirty-five years ago their music is still regularly played on radio stations around the world and their recordings are still hugely popular.

Anna: Recently a new spectacular musical show has been launched in Las Vegas. The show is called Love. To tell us more about it and the Beatles, here's Amber Barnfather.

Amber: Hi, I'm Amber
In the programme today we look at the language used to report on a new musical about the most famous pop music band in history - The Beatles.

MUSIC: Love Me Do

Amber: Love Me Do – The Beatles very first hit single, which reached number 4 in the charts in October 1962! And making music about love became The Beatles 'trademark' – it was the usual theme of their songs, it was what they typically sang about. Their 'trademark'.

And the word 'love' is the title of the new musical show that had its 'premiere' – its first ever performance – in the Mirage Theatre in Las Vegas on Friday 30 June. By all accounts it was a 'glitzy' event – a very glamorous event attended by stars! Sir Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr were there, and so were Yoko

Ono and Olivia Harrison, the widows of John Lennon and George Harrison. And the show is all about – the band’s ‘legacy’ – the band’s history. After the release of Love Me Do it wasn’t long before The Beatles topped the charts for weeks and weeks at a time – in August 1963, they spent 7 weeks at the top of the charts with this unforgettable track.

MUSIC: She Loves You

Amber: She Loves You – a hit back in the early 60s when ‘Beatlemania’ swept the world! The new musical show, Love, covers this time, as well as the 1940s when the Beatles were growing up, and their later psychedelic period. And this next song was a big hit back in the late 60s and early 70s, in The Beatles psychedelic days.

MUSIC: Strawberry Fields Forever

Amber: Strawberry Fields Forever is just one of 130 songs by The Beatles which feature in Love – a new show about the history of the hugely famous band. The show is an acrobatic and dance spectacle set to a ‘soundscape’ – a specially created piece of music that uses parts of many different songs mixed together. A ‘soundscape’.

As well as upbeat tracks, the show includes sad songs – such as A Day in the Life – which is played when the show refers to the death of John Lennon’s mother in a road accident.

MUSIC: A Day in the Life

Amber: The show Love has been described as an ‘extravaganza’ – a large, exciting and expensive entertainment. It is performed by the world-famous acrobatic dance group, Cirque de Soleil.

So let’s end this edition of The Music Show with a little of the song which was the band’s ‘swansong’ – the band’s last song. The Beatles split up in 1970 but their music is ever-popular!

MUSIC: Let It Be

Callum: That was Amber Barnfather.

Even today, after all these years the Beatles are still well-known and popular. So what is it about them and their music that has made them so influential and so popular? One person who can answer this is Paul Gambaccini. Paul has dedicated his life to popular music. He's been a broadcaster and author for many years and has met and interviewed members of the Beatles on a number of occasions. I asked him if he could remember the first time he heard a Beatles song. Listen out for this information, when did he first hear the Beatles and what was his reaction.

PAUL GAMBACCINI

In the last week of December 1963 I was on the porch of my family house in the town of West Port Connecticut. I was listening to the New York radio station WINS, the DJ was Stan Z Burns. It was about quarter to two in the afternoon and he said, I'm now going to play a record that is popular in England, I want to Hold Your Hands by the Beatles.

Now for me to be able to remember that indicates that I was really impressed by the record that I heard and I was, as they say today, blown away. This was an incredibly fresh voice, it was an optimistic voice, it was exciting music.

Callum: Paul Gambaccini there. To help us out with language points and vocabulary today we have Nuala O'Sullivan here, hello Nuala

Callum, Anna, Nuala discuss – highlight how specific the memory was

Answer Dec 63, about 1.45

Very impressed – blown away

Callum: I went on to ask Paul why he thinks it is that the Beatles have been popular for so long.

PAUL GAMBACCINI

The Beatles are the classical music of Rock and Roll. They are the pinnacle of achievement. One thing that made the Beatles special was their novelty, their newness. The fact that they made the self-contained group the standard for music making. It has remained that way for 40 years.

The song writing contributions of John Lennon and Paul McCartney were outstanding. There have been tens of thousands of cover versions of Beatles songs but in almost every case the best version remains the original.

Under the supervision of producer George Martin they made one masterpiece after another and no wonder people today respond, they are responding to quality and the fact that this music has lasted as well as it has for the first 40 years suggests that it will last for more than 40 more years.

Discuss Content/Vocab:

Pinnacle of achievement

Self-contained group – wrote, recorded, played, sung

Anna / Callum / Nuala discuss Beatles

PHONE CALLER 1 - Wendy

Callum: I asked Paul if he had a favourite Beatles track ...

PAUL GAMBACCINI

I have a favourite Beatles album, which is Revolver. I think every track there is precise, it is imaginative and brings to fruition all of the clever ideas that went into the making of this record.

Callum: That was the track Eleanor Rigby from Paul Gambaccini's favourite Beatles Album, Revolver

This is the Talk about English webcast live from London, I'm Callum Robertson.

Anna: And I'm Anna Jones. Coming up, jewels, language and vocabulary

Callum: But first today's competition. To win a BBC Learning English prize you need to answer this question. The word 'wicked' means bad, evil. But it also has a more modern meaning. What does the word 'wicked' mean in its modern slang meaning? You can hear the answer a little later in the programme.

Anna: When you think you know the answer, email us at talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk. Remember to include your name, country and if you'd like to join us on the programme, your telephone number.

Callum: Now, a visit to a special bright, shiny exhibition

Anna: Yes, I'm going to be looking at the language used to describe glittering stones and silver jewellery made by the well known jewellery company, Tiffany. The Tiffany brand – a **brand** is a type of product made by a particular company - was founded in 1837 by Charles Lewis Tiffany in New York and by the 1840's

was selling diamond jewellery. Over 150 years later Tiffany is now known all over the world for its stunning jewellery. And for the first time in its history an exhibition has opened in central London featuring over 200 pieces of Tiffany jewellery. Our BBC Learning English colleague, John Escolme, went along to see the exhibition and was guided around it by its curator Claire Phillips. Claire tells us which is her favourite **exhibit** or piece of jewellery featuring at the exhibition. What is it and when was it made?

Claire Philipps

One of my absolute favourites is the fire opal collar made for the Paris exposition in 1900. And at the time it was described as being the finest collection of fire opals in the world.

Anna: Claire says that “one of her absolute favourites” – one of her best-liked things – is the “fire opal collar.” An **opal** is a precious stone whose colour changes when the position of the person looking at it changes – this one is a fire opal – the colours of fire – reds, yellows, greens and oranges. Claire describes the fire opal collar in more detail. Listen out for some of the adjectives and other descriptive terms that she uses:

Claire Philipps

These extraordinary **glowing** orange and green stones with their marvellous play of colour arranged as a collar that would have been worn around the neck with originally a wonderful **pendant** hanging from it.. The **geometric patterning** based on native American art but really the river of rich orange and green stones described by Tiffany’s gemologist at the time as “each one a **miniature sunset** in the palm of your hand.” .

Anna: Claire uses some lovely language to describe the fire opal collar. She uses the adjective “glowing” which means that the stones are producing a continuous light. The stones are arranged as a collar that would have been worn around the neck and would have had a **pendant** or object - perhaps a diamond cut

into a special shape - hanging from the opal stones. She says that the collar is like a “river of rich orange and green stones” – the necklace of precious stones looks like an orange and green river. It has geometric patterning which means that the stones are arranged in a particular order or pattern. The gemologist – the person at Tiffanys who is a precious stones expert – says that each one of the stones is like a miniature sunset in the palm of your hand. Each stone is like a tiny image of the sun setting with its mass of rich red and orange colours. If you hold something in the palm of your hand you hold it in the inside of your hand from the wrist to the base of your fingers. Here’s Clare again – try to listen out for the descriptive language she uses.

Claire Philipps

These extraordinary **glowing** orange and green stones with their marvellous play of colour arranged as a collar that would have been worn around the neck with originally a wonderful **pendant** hanging from it. The **geometric patterning** based on native American art but really the river of rich orange and green stones described by Tiffany’s gemologist at the time as “each one a **miniature sunset** in the palm of your hand.”

Anna: Finally John ask about a picture at the exhibition of Audrey Hepburn, the famous actress who starred in the 1961 film ‘Breakfast at Tiffany’s’. What colour is the diamond she is wearing and what other word does she use to describe its colour?

Claire Philipps

So we’ve come now to quite a large picture of Audrey Hepburn – wearing what? Well Audrey Hepburn wearing a magnificent Tiffany necklace designed by John Schlumbaget in a pattern of ribbons, diamond ribbons. But at its centre the magnificent Tiffany diamond which is over 128 carats - a beautiful yellow diamond – a beautiful canary yellow stone.

Anna: Well Audrey Hepburn is wearing a beautiful yellow diamond and Claire describes it as a “canary” yellow diamond - a canary is a small yellow bird. Clare says that the diamond is over 128 carats – a carat is a unit for measuring the weight of jewels. So Audrey Hepburn is wearing a beautiful yellow Tiffany diamond.

MUSIC – Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds

Callum: And as we've been talking about the Beatles today that report from Anna ends with the track – Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.

Anna: And the Beatles are the topic of today's live vote. At the end of the programme we will play the track you have voted for – you can see the choices on bbclearningenglish.com/webcast

Callum: One of the challenges of learning any language is learning the vocabulary. This can be particularly challenging as over time words can change their meaning and sometimes words can mean the opposite of what you might think. To keep us up to date with some of these changes is language expert Professor David Crystal. Today he talks about the word 'wicked'.

DAVID CRYSTAL – WICKED

Wicked! Note the intonation. It means ‘wonderful’, ‘great’, ‘cool’, ‘splendid’. It came into English from United States’ black slang in the 1980s or maybe earlier. Certainly it arrived in Britain in the late 1980s.

It was part of a trend which goes back decades to use bad words to mean good concepts, or the other way round. I mean you might remember saying, ‘that’s great!’ meaning ‘it isn’t great’. And always there’s been this use of the word ‘naughty’ to mean ‘nice’. So it’s part of a general trend.

It's mainly used as an adjective in front of a noun, you know, 'we had a wicked time!' Or, of course, you can use it on its own, just saying, you know, 'wicked!' as a reaction – that's how youngsters use it. And youngsters, of course, knowing that grown ups are now using it as well have decided to use other bad words in the same sort of way – I've heard from young people in the last couple of years words like 'evil' meaning 'good', or 'brutal' meaning 'good'. Wicked is still around. It's meant, of course, that the traditional sense of wicked is now being squeezed out, much as 'gay' made it difficult to use the traditional sense of 'merry' or 'cheerful' when it started to be used in reference to homosexuals. So with wicked, tone of voice is the only way to make the distinction between the old meaning and the new meaning, and even that's ambiguous sometimes, so you have to be careful, and pay very careful attention to the context.

And notice that the word is extending its use. The other day, for the first time, I heard somebody say, 'wicked cool' meaning 'very cool'.

Callum: That was Professor David Crystal on "Wicked"

Phone Caller 2 - Jelena

Callum: You're listening to Talk about English, live from London with me Callum Robertson.

Anna: And me Anna Jones

Callum: Anna, have you ever interviewed anyone really really famous, a superstar?

Reply –discuss – nerves etc

Callum: I asked Paul Gambaccini how he felt when interviewing members of the Beatles, did he get nervous or star-struck?

PAUL GAMBACCINI

You are trained to do your job so it would be quite amateur of me to panic in the face of Paul McCartney or Ringo Star. But it is true that every time that I'm in a room with Paul McCartney and he leaves I think, there goes Mozart, because I do believe that when we are all gone from the Earth people will regard McCartney as a giant on the level of Mozart.

Callum: So Paul is able to keep professional when interviewing superstars, even though he has a very high opinion of them.

Nuala: **comments**

Callum: Now it's time to hear the latest episode of our online soap opera, the Flatmates. In this episode Tim and Alice are in Germany and England's World Cup game against Portugal has just ended

FLATMATES

Tim: England are out! We lost on penalties again!

Alice: I'm gutted! I blame Rooney.

Tim: He didn't do nuffink!

Alice: How can you say that? We all saw what he did. The ref had to send him off.

Tim: I still say we was robbed. The ref was far too free and easy with the cards.

Alice: You're just looking for a scapegoat.

Tim: No I'm not.

Alice: What about the manager, the skipper, the strikers? Don't you blame them?

Tim: Don't be so rational. We're going back empty-handed and I can't stand it!

Alice: Oh cheer up Tim. We'll be home soon and you and Michal can commiserate each other – England and Poland out of the World Cup..... until next time

Callum: That was the Flatmates and you can follow their adventures on the website with quizzes and language activities.

Anna: You can find them at bbclearningenglish.com/flatmates.

Callum: Well I suppose we couldn't get through this week's programme without mentioning the World Cup

(Panel discuss match and response and upcoming final)

Callum: And now it's time to take a look at some headlines and stories behind the headlines from the British newspapers. This one comes from the front page of the Daily Mirror

Boo Hoo Ron Ron

About Portuguese player Ronaldo who was pictured in tears after losing last night
(British media anger at player for seeming to help to get Wayne Rooney sent off)

A petulant child

Reviled

Booed

The jeers

ANNOUNCE COMPETITION WINNER

VOTE RESULT – GOODBYES

MUSIC - BEATLES YESTERDAY